8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RHl Caucasia RHl

585 however, we must make allowance for tribal differences. The Ingush wedding has been described especially well by Jakovlev.[25]

There is excitement in the village,[26] and the whole atmosphere is festive. Before one of the Ingush houses a crowd is gathering, the riders towering above all. There is reason for this excitement and festivity, for a son is being married. Inside the house, too, there is excitement—but perhaps we should call it [273] "activity" instead. A sheep is being slaughtered, *braga* is being brewed, cakes are being baked. But in spite of all this hustle, there seems to be time and reason enough to interrupt all work—just for a moment—the butcher, the brewer, the baker, one and all, go to the door and gaze a moment at the crowd as it begins to form into a semi-orderly wedding procession. At the head we see the proud father of the groom, and behind him his male relatives and some girls. Even billy-goats and rams are there (gifts for the bride's family)—all are there except the groom. He and one of his comrades disappeared several days ago and have not been heard of since. (The bride vanished from her home too, but by now she has most likely returned.) The bridegroom is no doubt "hiding" with a neighbour. The whole village is excited—everybody, we are told, except the groom, for etiquette demands that he act as unconcerned as if marriage were an everyday affair.

Men on horseback, men, women, and noisy children on creaky carts or on foot, wend their way down the dusty village road. When they reach the bride's house her father dashes out in front of the procession and with beaming face [534] welcomes all heartily. The *pandir* (a native three-stringed instrument) begins a joyful wedding tune and all join in the customary marriage songs. Formerly the girls would form into two contending choirs, the friends of the groom against [522] the friends of the bride, alternately singing songs and trying to out-ridicule the other,[27] a veritable battle of tongues and voices.

[526] Singing, dancing, and feasting, continue till evening, when the procession is formed again (but this time not without the bride). The horsemen now gallop off and begin their wild, dangerous wedding races.[28]

As soon as the procession reaches the groom's house, the bride enters the *saklia* and receives some honey and butter, coyly listening to the words "Be thou ever soft as butter and ever sweet as honey."

After this little ceremony she is led behind a curtain where she must remain for the next few days, entertained only by a number of girl-companions.

The formal marriage contract takes place according to the simple Islamic rite. The mullah, as usual, presides, while the parents of the bride and groom make the contract.

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[25] Jakovlev, *Ingali*, pp. 52—56.
See also Dubrovin's description, *Istorija*, I, i, pp. 430—435.

[26] A year or two may elapse after the betrothal, the time of marriage depending mainly on how soon the *kalym* can be paid. Cf. Berže, *Čečnja i Čečency*, p. 98.

[27] For texts of wedding songs see Jakovlev, *l. c.*

[28] Grabovskij, "Ekonomičeskij i domašnij byt, etc.," p. 21. Horseraces play an important part in funerals throughout the Caucasus. See R. Bleichsteiner, "Rossweihe und Pferderennen im Totenkult der kaukasischen Völker," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, Salzburg-Leipzig, 1936, pp. 414—495.